

**Remarks Prepared for  
Jeffrey W. Runge, MD  
Administrator  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

**Lifesavers 23  
NHTSA Awards Luncheon  
March 14, 2005  
Charlotte, North Carolina**

- Thank you, Terry for that introduction.

**[Terry Schiavone, South East Regional Administrator]**

- Let me personally welcome everyone to Charlotte - my hometown. It is always nice to come home, especially when I get a chance to speak to a group of dedicated friends and colleagues who share a safety mission.
- In the past year, we have witnessed several road safety milestones. Those milestones have only been reached because of the people in this room and thousands of your co-workers and partners around the country.
- It is an honor to be a part of President Bush's Administration, who often reminds his appointees that "good policy makes good politics."
- For my part, I also believe that good science makes good policy. This is a fundamental value of government that Secretary Mineta and I share.

***Reversing the Trend***

- The news is better than it was last year when I spoke at the Lifesavers conference because of your hard work. For the first time in five years, the overall number of motor vehicle traffic fatalities declined.
- We cannot claim victory, of course, with 42,643 people still dying in motor vehicle crashes. But the decline is important especially in the face of increasing exposure. Americans continue to buy more cars, and drive more miles.

***Lowest Rate in Recorded History***

- The traffic fatality rate is the lowest since NHTSA started keeping records 29 years ago.

- Secretary Mineta issued a challenge to us at DOT: To lower this rate to 1.0 per VMT by 2008.

### ***Highway Safety Priorities***

- Our 5 highway safety priorities have not changed from last year because of the potential to save the greatest number of lives.
- It's clear you have answered the call because we have experienced remarkable progress on each of our priorities.

### ***Safety Belt Use Rates***

- Safety belt use increased to 80% in 2004 – a record high.
- Since 2000, safety belt use has increased 9 percentage points, which translates into over 2000 lives saved a year. Every percentage point we raise belt use saves the U.S. economy about \$800 million per year.
- We must never lose sight of the fact that enforcing safety belt laws aren't about giving out tickets; it's about saving lives.

### ***Lives Saved By Vehicle Safety Technologies***

- To illustrate this point, we recently released a study, which found that safety technologies have saved nearly 329,000 lives between 1960 and 2002.
- One safety technology was responsible for more than half of the lives saved. That technology is the safety belt.
- But it must be worn to be effective.
- And nothing is as effective at motivating use as strong laws and sustained enforcement.

### ***State Safety Belt Laws***

- Here is the State-by-State scorecard of belt laws currently:
  - 21 states have a primary safety belt law.
  - 29 states have secondary laws.
- On the legislative front this year we are hopeful that more states will upgrade their belt laws. States that look promising include Florida, Alaska, Missouri, Maine and South Carolina.

- Primary laws are easier to enforce and carry the message that these laws are just as important as other traffic laws.

**[ASK ATTENDEES FROM TENNESSEE TO STAND]**

- Last year, Tennessee enacted a primary safety belt law. This new law would not have happened without the commitment and dedication of its two prime legislative sponsors, who are with us today:
  - Senator Michael Williams, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee
  - Representative John Hood
- Furthermore, this legislation received significant support from Dr. John Maupin, president of Meharry Medical College.
- Already, belt use in Tennessee increased 3.5 percentage points to 72% by mid-2004, after two years of holding steady.
- We will have a better picture of the initial impact of the belt law in Tennessee after our 2005 state surveys are released later this year. But our experience shows that Tennessee's belt use increase so far is in line with other states that recently passed primary laws.

**[ASK REPRESENTATIVES FROM ARIZONA, HAWAII, MICHIGAN AND NEVADA TO STAND]**

- There were also significant gains in belt use among several other states, with both primary and secondary laws.
- Arizona has catapulted into the lead in the United States with a remarkable 95.3%.
- Hawaii continues its climb into the mid 90's with a 3.3 percentage point gain to 95.1%
- Michigan cracked the 90 % threshold with a 5.7 percentage point gain to 90.5%.
- Nevada, with its secondary law, had an astounding 7.9 percentage point gain to 86.6%.

**[LEAD APPLAUSE]**

***Safety Belt Use Rates by Law and State***

- While every state needs a primary safety belt law, we also need to ensure that the laws, both secondary and primary, are vigorously and consistently enforced.

### ***Reauthorization: Safety Belt Incentives***

- Primary laws save States money by increasing belt use and lowering crash costs. Primary belt laws can also earn States money for their highway safety efforts.
- The President's SAFTEA bill includes a \$100 million primary law incentive program that would provide flexible grant funds both to States that have already enacted these laws and to those States that either enact primary laws or achieve 90 % belt use.

### ***Safety Belt Benefits***

- Let's sum this up. The work you did meant that the nation experienced an 80% belt use in 2004. This increase over last year resulted in an estimated:
  - 2.8 million more people buckling up
  - 270 additional lives saved
  - Reduced severity of more than 4,000 moderate to critical injuries
  - \$870 million in cost savings

### ***CIOT***

- *Click It Or Ticket*, our high visibility safety belt enforcement campaign is scheduled for May 23 – June 5, 2005.
- I want to thank you for committing your time and resources to this effective campaign and your leadership in your States and local communities.
- However, as we accomplish higher rates of belt use, we encounter the chronic non belt-use population.
- These are the riskiest drivers: those most likely to speed and drive drunk.
- Our experience shows that what changes motorist's behavior more than anything else is the threat of receiving a ticket.
- But real, effective enforcement is 365 days a year, 24/7.
- High visibility enforcement is the nexus of public education, legislation and engineering. The safety belt is a free piece of engineering equipment but sadly people seem to need laws and enforcement to remember to use it.

### ***Alcohol-Related Fatalities***

- As more people are buckling up, fewer people are driving impaired.

- In 2003, alcohol-related fatalities decreased by nearly 3% to 17,013.
- Just as importantly, alcohol-related fatalities with blood alcohol .08 and higher decreased by more than 3%.
- *The Charlotte Observer* deserves recognition for their outstanding reporting in a series of articles about impaired driving. Shining a light on this national tragedy is important to our efforts.

### ***Strategies to Reduce Alcohol-impaired Driving***

- Our strategy of high visibility enforcement combined with DWI courts, special prosecutors and treatment is key to effectively reach this population.
- The Charlotte DWI Court is celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Congratulations to Judge Howerton and his staff for their outstanding work.

### ***A/R Rates***

- 24 states are at or below the national average of .59 alcohol-related fatalities per 100 million VMT. 26 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are above the national average.
- The population centers, in the states like California and New York, have very active impaired driving programs. And as a result, they are driving down the alcohol-related fatality rate throughout the nation.
- However, rural areas and the southern states continue to be a problem for alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities.

### ***Congratulations***

- Congratulations to the 28 states that experienced a decline in their overall alcohol-related fatalities or rate in 2003.

### ***Motorcycle Fatalities***

- We have an emerging epidemic with deaths among motorcycle operators.
- Our overall fatalities would have dropped even more last year, however, we had a 12% increase in motorcycle rider fatalities.

- One big reason motorcycle fatalities have skyrocketed is several large and populated states have repealed helmet laws.
- Helmet laws are based on sound science, and I would like to recognize Louisiana for re-enacting their helmet law. Governor's Representative Jim Champagne let the data do the talking

### ***Motorcycle Operators Killed - Alcohol Level and Age Group***

- Not all motorcycle operators are created equal, as you can see the difference between age group and alcohol level among motorcycle fatalities. There is an increased prevalence of impaired driving fatalities among 30-49 year old motorcycle operators.
- This illustrates why motorcycles should be included in all of your impaired driving programs and materials. Law enforcement needs to be trained on detecting the cues of impaired motorcycle operators, especially at checkpoints.
- We have motorcycle materials posted on our website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)
- *You Drink and Drive. You Lose*, scheduled for August 19 – September 5, 2005, will also focus on motorcycle operators.

### ***Speeding***

- There is an emerging new priority at NHTSA that we've been working on for several years and that is speeding.
- Speed continues to be a contributing factor in nearly 1/3 (31%) of fatal motor vehicle crashes.
- 13,380 lives are lost every year in speeding-related crashes and thousands of injuries.
- Speeding related crashes cost our economy \$40.4 billion annually.

### ***Speeding Fatality Rate Highest on Low Speed Roads***

- Higher posted speed limit roads are not as significant a problem as low speed collector and local roads.
- Local roads have posted speed limits usually between 20-45 mph and represent almost 69 percent of total public road mileage.
- That's why it is critical that speeding laws be enforced at the local level.

### ***Speeding Enforcement Strategies***

- Enforcement is a crucial component in this comprehensive approach to address the speeding problem.
- It is important that law enforcement utilize ALL methods available of speed measuring and speeding interdiction.
- Traditional enforcement is not the only solution, and in some cases, it may not be the appropriate solution.
- Innovative tools such as automated speed enforcement can augment the effectiveness of traditional patrol methods, especially in difficult to enforce areas.
- Your leadership is needed to promote effective and efficient speed management solutions at the local community level.

### ***Haddon Matrix***

- NHTSA's first administrator, Dr. William Haddon invented a matrix as a way to approach highway safety.
- (Describe pre-crash, crash, and post crash)
- The advancement of safety technologies is forcing law enforcement and highway safety programmers to look beyond just the behavioral aspects to also include the vehicle.
- We are reaching the summit of crash worthiness in terms of the potential for lives saved. Our next frontier in highway safety is crash avoidance.
- Crash avoidance technologies, such adaptive cruise control and electronic stability control, are being installed on newer model cars, and in some cases, even as standard features.

### ***Tire Safety***

- Another important issue is tire maintenance. Neglecting proper tire safety maintenance has been costly for consumers and our economy.
- Tires should always be filled to manufacturers-recommended pressure, not comfort pressure.
- There never would have been a costly TREAD Act if people had properly inflated their tires and worn their safety belts.

- The Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) requirement alone is expected to cost consumers as much as \$1.2 billion per year.
- Tire maintenance also has environmental benefits. Properly inflated tires last longer, meaning landfills don't fill up as quickly with disposed tires.
- Moreover, tires filled to the correct pressure increases fuel economy because the vehicle gets better gas mileage.
- Please go to our website to learn more about Tire Safety Week April 24 – 30, 2005.

### *Safercar.gov*

- Market forces are the best and fastest way to bring about vehicle safety enhancements. And the best way to influence the market is to arm consumers with information.
- To that end, this year we launched [www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov), a consumer information website.
- We want every consumer to go to safercar.gov before they purchase a new vehicle.
- The site provides safety information on tires, airbags, crash tests, rollover prevention

### *Conclusion*

- Thank you for all you do each day to make people safer and to improve the quality of life in our communities nationwide.
- When things look good on the national level, it is because of your efforts.
- Later on we will recognize those of you who have been selected by your peers for particular recognition. But now, let's enjoy our lunch.

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